

TIIAP FY 1999
Project Narrative

Abyssinian Development Corp.

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Community Networking
New York, New York

PROJECT NARRATIVE: The Harlem Renaissance 2001 (HR2K1) Project

This project is intended for the Community Networking primary application area and the Education, Culture and Lifelong Learning secondary application area.

I. Project Definition

Harlem, at the advent of the 21st century, is undergoing a socio-economic transformation. However, a great many of the citizens of Harlem are currently unable to take advantage of the new economy uptown because they do not have access to the new technologies that are driving this transformation.

To insure that the citizens of Harlem have access to the educational, cultural, civic and socio-economic opportunities that the new technologies will make possible, Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) has organized the Harlem Renaissance 2001 or the HR2K1 Project. ADC has joined with Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families, Studio Museum in Harlem, Harlem School of the Arts, Harlem YMCA, Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center, Dance Theater of Harlem, National Black Theater, Playing To Win, Institute for Learning Technologies, University of Missouri at Columbia Advanced Technology Center, Horizon Live Distance Learning, the Employment Channel, Manhattan Neighborhood Network and Cablevision to form the HR2K1 consortium.

The HR2K1 will employ a three-part strategy to increase access to technology. The first part entails the development of six state-of-the-art public access technology centers. Five of these centers will be established at existing community-based organizations. These centers are:

- Rheedlen's Employment and Technology Center, 118th Street and Lenox Avenue
- Harlem School of the Arts, 141st Street and St. Nicholas Avenue
- Harlem YMCA, 135th Street and 7th Avenue
- Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center, 96th Street and West End Avenue
- Playing to Win's Harlem Community Computing Center, 111th Street and 5th Avenue.

The sixth center will be a large community technology center which will serve the entire Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone. Manhattan Neighborhood Networks in conjunction with ADC's real estate development group will collaborate on the establishment of a public access community technology center/Internet Service Provider (ISP) which will be sited in Central Harlem accessible by foot or public transportation.

The second part entails the development of a distance learning network which will be deployed in collaboration with Horizon Live Distance Learning throughout the public access technology centers. Besides basic access to e-mail, office productivity software, the World Wide Web and desktop videoconferencing, the user will have at the desktop access to an integrated multimedia distance learning system which is mediated via the Internet. Classes, seminars, training sessions led by remote instructors and companion materials and resources will be accessible simultaneously over this environment.

The HR2K1 will pilot two programs using the Horizon Live Distance Learning environment: Virtual Harlem and the Employment Channel.

Virtual Harlem was developed by Bryan Carter, a Virtual Reality Instructor at the Advanced Technology Center at University of Missouri at Columbia. Virtual Harlem gives the user the experience of going back in time to the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance in 1927. For the purposes of the HR2K1, this virtual reality environment will be the basis for a web-enabled Internet-based curriculum which Prof. Carter will teach on-line at the technology centers.

The Employment Channel is a public access content provider who produces the Employment Channel television program and maintains the Employment Channel job seekers site on the Internet. Each user will have access to these resources at the desktop.

The third part entails the organization, funding and administration of a computer loan program at the Manhattan Neighborhood Networks public access technology center. The computer loan program would place 50 computers in the homes of people who frequent the center and who live in the local housing projects. These people depending upon their financial situation would receive a total or partial subsidy toward the purchase of a home computer, fast modem and monthly Internet access. The Manhattan Neighborhood Networks public access technology center would serve as the ISP and would offer low-cost if not free Internet access services.

The HR2K1 proposes to achieve the following outcomes:

- To physically increase by the year 2001, the ability of a member of the Harlem community to access a computer with Internet-based services on a daily basis for free;
- To numerically document that more people are using computers for targeted personal uses because access has been increased via the establishment of the centers;
- To show that public computer and Internet access increases the likelihood of the purchase of a home computer system.

II. Evaluation

An External Evaluation will be conducted by Dr. Joseph Bowman of the Center for Urban Youth and Technology at SUNY-Albany. Dr. Bowman and his Research Assistants will collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data in order to determine the overall impact of the HR2K1 Project.

The External Evaluation will be formal, objective and summative in nature. Dr. Bowman and his assistants will be responsible for the development and administration of baseline and exit surveys, as well as interviews with Center staff and participants. Two staff personnel will visit each site four times per year in conjunction with the quarterly timeline that has been established by the program design. They will collect data on usage, numbers of people being served, and types of activities engaged in. Quantitative data will be analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data will be grouped, or “coded,” into various categories based on structural category and theme. Percent frequencies will be calculated for the coded responses; these frequencies

provide rich, naturalistic data and will form the basis for reporting on qualitative data. The qualitative ethnographic data will consist of videotaped interviews of participants, digital program documents and video tape tracking of program performance during the two year period of the HR2K1. All data will be confidential and release forms will be constructed to maintain the integrity of the data and participants in the project. In addition to the production of a Preliminary Report at the end of Year One, the final deliverable/disseminable will be a summative report at the end of Year Two.

The External Evaluation will be let as a subcontract to CUYT for a fee-for-hire basis costed at \$30,000 per year.

III. Significance

The significance of the HR2K1 methodology is that it makes use of a number of breakthrough technologies which in combination create a new way in which underserved community members can connect to meaningful learning in the areas of education, cultural enrichment and employment. Beyond providing high speed access to the Internet, the HR2K1 provides an all-in-one solution so that the person who is gaining first time access to a computer and the Internet is also immediately connected to relevant and useful educational, cultural, and employment content resources which can assist the user in their acquisition of skills. The HR2K1 employs a web-enabled virtual reality immersive learning environment, a realtime Java-based distance learning environment which uses a simple browser interface over the HR2K1 intranet giving the user both synchronous and asynchronous access to courses and classes and these resources are available as standard applications across the network consortium. The user need not spend time “learning” particular applications but instead the user can immediately engage the instructional environment seamlessly.

The HR2K1 is a model in that it provides an all-in-one solution targeted at the population that is most in need of access to advanced technology-enabled services. This population is the majority service population in all of the Empowerment Zones located throughout the country. The dissemination of this model can be effected via the Internet itself and in this way the implementor need not always engage in development from the ground up but can simply deploy the HR2K1 resources and services electronically in pre-existing sites.

IV. Project Feasibility

Technical Approach

The HR2K1 will develop a high speed Internet/Intranet that will connect the six technology centers. Wide area connectivity will be provided via T-1 lines or SDSL connections. Local area network connectivity will be provided via gigabit speed ethernet. All of the sites will be standardized around the use of the Horizon Live Distance Learning system, an Internet-based realtime learning environment. The Virtual Harlem application is a virtual reality environment that allows the user to engage in a semi-immersive surrogate travel experience through the world of the Harlem Renaissance circa 1927 and this will provide the source materials for a web-based curricular application.

This configuration allows the HR2K1 to get at the issue of connecting learners with the appropriate resources and tools. It also is cost effective in that the price of connectivity whether using T-1 lines or SDSL due to the decrease in the cost of these high speed services, is now affordable and no longer represents the lions share of a technology diffusion project. The fiscal and technical resources can now go to meeting the needs of the end users through the system as a delivery mechanism for realtime education, cultural enrichment and employment services.

As it relates to scalability, the system is compatible with low end or high end applications because the network is based on a high bandwidth model. So as the demands of the users increase the system can handle the traffic.

Applicants Qualifications

The project will be led by the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC). Founded by the Abyssinian Baptist Church, a two hundred year institution with a legacy of social and economic activism, the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) is dedicated to the improvement of the quality of life in Harlem. A year ago, ADC completed a process of long range strategic planning and the use of the new technologies as a strategic focus grew out of the process. At that time, ADC organized a design committee of organizations all of whom made major investments in the life and community of Harlem by taking on technology equity and access issues. Since that time, each of these organizations has engaged in independent fundraising efforts with the goal of securing access to computers and the Internet for its service populations.

The Studio Museum in Harlem has undertaken an initiative funded by Bell Atlantic to digitize its collections and make them available to students, artists, museum collectors and other interested parties over the World Wide Web.

The Harlem School of the Arts also with funding from Bell Atlantic has undertaken a project called HarlemNet which is a collaboration with the Mott Hall School, the Harlem Educational Activities Fund and the Interactive Telecommunications Program at NYU for the purpose of exposing the students to the arts-in-technology.

The Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center provides opportunities for middle and high school students to develop creative skills in the theatrical and broadcast arts. Their graduates have gone on to successful creative careers in the film and television industries. Recently, to expand their curriculum, Frederick Douglass has implemented a computer-based desktop publishing program which will grow into a web development program.

The Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families has undertaken a community education, social service, and technology access initiative called the Harlem Children's Zone. With major support from the Rockefeller Foundation, they are developing the Employment and Technology Center on 118th Street where community residents can develop computer-based skills thus helping themselves become employable in the 21st C. labor market. Rheedlen has also received support from the Empowerment Zone in its efforts.

The Institute for Learning Technologies at Columbia University / Teachers College, over the course of the 90's, has been involved in initiatives aimed at the deployment of interactive multimedia telecommunications technologies in the schools and CBO's of Harlem and Upper Manhattan. Beginning with the Living Schoolbook Project funded by the New York State Foundation for Science and Technology and the Harlem Environmental Access Project (HEAP) which was funded by the NTIA in its first round of funding, ILT has been spearheading the development of a testbed of schools, libraries, CBO's and corporate organizations all platformed on and using advanced new media technologies. All of this activity coalesces under the umbrella of the Eiffel Project which is a five year technology diffusion initiative funded by the Technology Learning Challenge Grants Program. Working with the Center for Collaborative Education, ILT will bring advanced technologies to 70 schools located in Manhattan, the South Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn. Also under this grant ILT is collaborating with four community partners: Abyssinian Development Corporation, the Minisink Townhouse of the New York Mission Society, the Studio Museum in Harlem and the National Urban League.

Budget, Implementation Schedule and Timeline

The **HR2K1** project is a two year initiative with a total yearly cost of approximately 1.3 million dollars. The project will be carried out in stages with each stage lasting three months. The last quarter of 1999 will be used for Pre-Project Planning, Organization and Design. During this period, the consortium will take part in stakeholder meetings where the initial technology planning and assessment takes place. These meetings will also be used so that all of the partners and participants can get to know one another. This will include the internal and the external evaluators as well. The actual project starts up in the first quarter of 2000 which corresponds with Stage One. There will be a total of eight stages with each stage lasting for three months. In the Timetable for Implementation section of the Appendices is included a detailed timetable and implementation plan.

Evidence of Sustainability

For the purpose of sustaining the consortium's activities past the initial grant period, the strategy will revolve around three approaches: (1.) the identification of continuance funding from outside sources; (2.) the assumption of the wide-area network usage fees and maintenance by each member organization within their ongoing budget for operations; and (3.) the development of revenue generating programs and activities that make use of the new technologies like on-line malls and e-commerce while drawing upon conventional income methods to create profit centers within organizations that make up the consortium.

This proposal will also be submitted for funding to the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Corporation and the Bell Atlantic Foundation. Other potential funders will be identified over the course of the project.

IV. Community Involvement

HR2K1 as a consortium includes ten of the major institutions in Harlem representing arts and culture, education and technology, as well as human services and community economic development. The solicitation of the project partners started one year ago with the establishment of a partnership between Abyssinian Development Corporation and the Institute for Learning Technologies. The solicitation process began in December of 1997. ADC sent out a letter of information inviting the potential partners to an Information Meeting on January 8th, 1998 which was hosted by the Studio Museum in Harlem. The other organizations in attendance were Abyssinian Development Corporation, the Harlem School of the Arts, the Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center, Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families and the Institute for Learning Technologies. Bruce Lincoln of the Institute for Learning Technologies made a presentation to the group about the concept for a "Harlem Community Networking Project", a collaborative that would knit together the disparate efforts of the individual organizations into an Empowerment Zone-wide technology diffusion initiative. Those in attendance agreed to participate in the consortium.

Support for end users

The end users of the HR2K1 will be citizens of Harlem. A great many of the citizens of Harlem have inadequate educational backgrounds which prevent them from being competitive in the labor market. The HR2K1 in recognizing this felt it was necessary to create a way to serve this population by accelerating the time spent learning how to use a computer. The Horizon Live Distance Learning system provides the solution to this obstacle. The user can immediately connect with relevant educational, cultural and employment information resources at the desktop of their workstation.

Privacy

The issue of privacy turns on two considerations. One is where individual organizations are concerned with protecting their proprietary information from access by unwanted parties. And the other is where individuals from the community will need to input personal information that will require protection. To protect the individual organizations from outside interference with such things as financial records and confidential case management files, the network will utilize firewalls to prevent intrusion of that kind. Also, intranets will be developed by each organization for the purpose of sharing information pertinent to staffpersons. For the purpose of meeting the needs of individual clients on the system an intra-organizational extranet will be developed. To protect individuals who need to input personal information or access specific information such as school report cards, the system will provide the user with a registration system that will provide a password.

V. Reducing Disparities

Historically, Harlem has been plagued by a combination of social ills: economic privation, lack of educational opportunities, jobs and adequate health services which give rise to such dysfunctions as crime, drug use, family dissolution and community instability.

Also, the spread of computers is linked to the socioeconomic status of families. Due to these factors, the communities of Harlem and Upper Manhattan not only lag behind other communities; they are presented with unique problems when it comes to the diffusion of technologies. By forming this consortium, each organization can gain support for their individual efforts while collaborating around the larger consortial effort which will provide advice, resources, due diligence when it comes to outside vendors, as well as a learning curve that will empower the individual organization to achieve its objectives in the context of a larger group accomplishing its end-in-view.

Strategies for overcoming barriers to access

HR2K1 will employ a knowledge transfer strategy similar to train-the-trainer. In this case, the strategy will work by providing infrastructure, equipment and training to the core organizations in the consortium. During Year One the project, each organization will receive support around the design and implementation of individualized technology plans for their particular service populations. During Year Two, as consortium members become platformed on the same level of technology, each will draw on the resources of the consortium to begin providing services to the target constituencies.

Documentation and Dissemination

Documentation Plan

The plan for documentation will revolve around the development of the following materials:

- Quarterly reports;
- Project logs provided by each organization which will be edited into journals published at the end of each project phase;
- Ethnographic video made available over the Web, in cassette form or on zip drives;
- A project website;
- An internal formative evaluation assessment;
- An external summative evaluation with plans for replication.

Dissemination Program

Local and Tri-State

HR2K1 will disseminate information about the project through the following means. ADC will create a monthly newsletter dedicated to HR2K1. The newsletter column will provide the progress report on a quarterly basis. Each other organization will contribute to the newsletter. Releases will be sent to local newspapers, magazines and other PR outlets. Local public affairs programs on radio (WLIB, WBAI) and television (Fox, UPN, ABC, PBS, & WB) will be contacted and invited to see the development and implementation of the technology centers in each community based organization. Over the two year period these outlets will be asked to feature each center as part of their local broadcasting format. Cablevision will provide distribution to the tri-state area via cable and Internet.

National and International

This project will be featured as part of the TIIAP website when funding is received and a website will be created for each tech center via the ADC website. Articles and presentations will feature the activities and research that evolves as these tech centers are developed. With the support of three universities (Columbia, University at Albany, University of Missouri at Columbia), HR2K1 will have access to academic and scholarly audiences for publication and presentations via print, video and Internet.